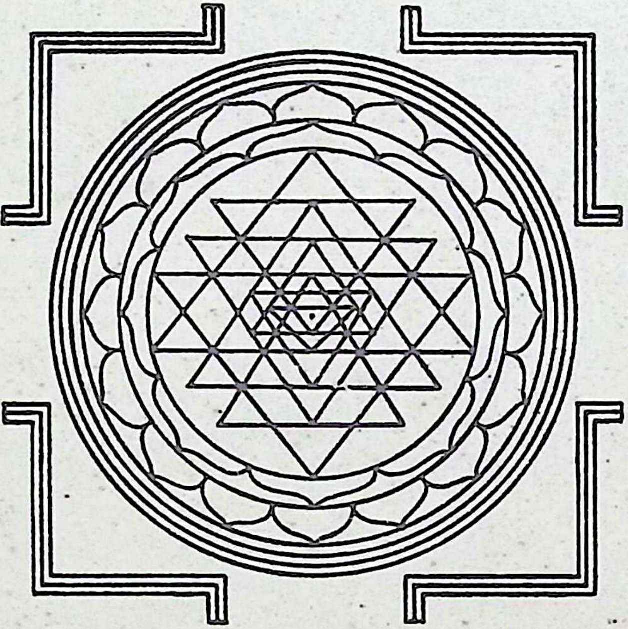
QUINTESSENCE
OF
SRI VIDYA



T. V. KAPALI SASTRY

QUINTESSENCE OF SRI VIDYA

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THE MAHAMANUSTAVA

of Sri T. V. Kapali Sastriar
with
INTRODUCTION, TRANSLATION AND NOTES
by
S. SHANKARANARAYANAN

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PREFACE

The *Mahamanustava* is a remarkable poem among the writings of Sri T. V. Kapali Sastriar. Composed during his sixtieth year, it celebrates the glory of the Sri Vidya in which he had been initiated by his father when he was yet a boy. It records his whole-souled relation with the Deity and his continued gratitude to Her. For he always looked upon this original Mother of his adoration as responsible for all the subsequent rapid transitions in his spiritual Quest. His meeting with his first Guru, Kavyakantha Vasishtha Ganapati Muni, in the very presence of the Deity he was worshipping at the Tripurasundari Temple in Tiruvottiyur, his coming under the direct grace of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi at Arunachala, and later his exclusive dedication to the ideal and yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother at Pondicherry, were realised by him as orderly steps guided by the benevolent Hand of the great Mother who first took him to Her bosom.

This poem is not a mere laudation of the Vidya, the Mother Creatrix. It dwells upon the significance of the Manifestation that is Sri Lalita-Tripurasundari, shows unambiguously the Path that leads to the Truth embodied by Her and the way to tread it. These features are indeed likely to be missed in the feast of poetic sound and sense with which the work abounds. Only an initiate admitted into the mysteries of the profound Vidya (discipline) can spot and delineate them in clear outline. And this sacred obligation has been ably discharged by Sri S. Shankaranarayanan who has had a fortunate and unique relation with Sastriar.

Sri Shankaranarayanan had been initiated into the worship of the Divine Mother by his grandfather even before he was ten and received powerful reinforcement to his inner aspiration from many quarters, but—he confesses—the living touch, the contact that vivified all practice and knowledge bequeathed to him, came from Sastriar. A new eye opened in him and with it a new world into which he takes the reader so effortlessly, so naturally. His intellectual clarity, luminous reason and the transparent sincerity of his soul vie with each other in the brilliant Introduction he writes to his translation of the Sanskrit verses. He has dived deep in the profounds of the poet-seer that is Sastriar and presented in a nutshell the fundamentals of the ancient mystic discipline of Sri Vidya as renewed and relived in the life of the author.

True knowledge unites. The Vidya that is cherished in this work establishes the oneness of Man, Nature and the Divine, both in essence and in expression, as shown by Sri Shankaranarayanan in his expository writing.

Sri Aurobindo Ashram,
Pondicherry.

M. P. PANDIT

INTRODUCTION

THE GREAT DISCIPLINES

Kasmai devaya havisha vidhema—" To which God shall we offer our oblations? " queried the ancient seers. As long as one believes in a Divinity presiding over the manifold creation, what does it matter whether one worships this god or that god? 'It matters much,' the Tantra would say. There abound readily-responding entities in the subtle world, a low order of deities who gratify the aspirant with petty gifts, lull him into a false sense of progress and security and finally bring his ruin. There are benevolent deities who take the seeker on the path steadily and safely and ultimately do him the utmost good. There are gods and gods and the whole creation is teeming with them. In the pyramidal structure of the cosmos spreading over a rising tier of consciousness, these gods are posited in serried sequence. At the top, there are certain cardinal Godheads, so many facets of the One Truth, that correspond to the Brahman of the Upanishads. The spiritual disciplines, leading to such cardinal Deities are known as Brahma Vidyas. These are also popular as Maha Vidyas, the great paths of discipline or Siddha Vidyas, the practices where accomplishment is assured.

Where the Supreme is adored as the great Goddess, the Tantra classifies the disciplines leading to the cardinal Deities as Dasha Maha Vidyas, the ten great paths of knowledge. Coming third in the order of these Vidyas is Sri Vidya, leading to Mahatripurasundari, the Beauty *par excellence* in the triple worlds. The Vidyas of Tripura Bhairavi and Kamalatmika, the fifth and the tenth of the Dasha Maha Vidyas are also known as Sri

Vidyas, as these deities have much in common with Tripurasundari. Here, we propose to deal with the Vidya of the great Goddess, known as Lalita, Tripurasundari and Rajarajeshwari.

THE CULT OF SRI VIDYA

The cult of Sri Vidya is so comprehensive in its scope and so all-embracing in its nature that it is said to be the highest of all Mantra Sadhaṇas, *Srividyaiva tu mantranam*. Being a Mahavidya, it does the utmost good to him who seeks the Divinity through it. Knowledge is attained and even the proverbially fickle wealth can be acquired in a permanent form; and if one is determined to reach the Supreme Goal, by Her grace, the Goal is attained ultimately.[1] Nothing short of Self-realisation and God-realisation is the goal of Sri Vidya. Much depends upon the seeker, and the Divine Mother grants whatever the seeker chooses. What should an earnest Sri Vidya *Upasaka* do? He should not choose anything; he should leave the choice to the great Goddess he adores. For, nowhere else can the Upanishadic saying that one who chooses the Self is already chosen by the Self be so much appreciated and understood than in the Sadhana of Sri Vidya. There is a guiding Grace throughout. Even from childhood the Grace protects the person destined to get initiated into Sri Vidya. He may be aware or not aware of its actions. All the same, it steers him clear through all doubts and difficulties, avoids for him the pitfalls and finally launches him on the path towards the destined Goal.[2]

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[1] Verse 24 (Verse numbers quoted herein refer to those of Mahamanustava).
[2] Verse 2.

When a person is initiated in Sri Vidya, he may not be at the outset in a position to appreciate and understand the significance of the path that has come to him and its full implications. The Vidya takes upon itself the Sadhana. It educates him, gives him the knowledge at each step and grants him ultimately self-knowledge, "by knowing which all this is known." Similarly, each desire of the seeker is taken up and worked out. Certain wants of the aspirant drop out as they are satisfied; some other wants vanish as they give place to higher wants. This process goes on till the aspirant learns to want only the Goddess and desire only Her Desire. In fact, the Tantra categorically declares that all and each cannot hope to step into the sacred precincts of Sri Vidya. It is exclusively reserved for the elite, for the man with a mission, for the man of destiny. So much so that strict secrecy is enjoined in order that the esoteric teaching may not fall in the hands of the profane. "It should be kept secret like the immoral conduct of one's mother," *svamatr jaravat gopya*, says the Tantra in its picturesque language. One can give away one's kingdom, even one's head but not the sixteen-lettered Sri Vidya.[1] The seer of Sri Vidya is the great Siva himself, the Lord of the triple world, the Supreme master of the Silent ones, *Maha mauna guru*. He it is that constantly guards the Vidya[2] and sees to it that it is transmitted properly amongst the elites.

Again, the ultimate goal of the Sadhana of Sri Vidya is Self-Realisation, the realisation of one's Self as the Goddess Herself. This is the culmination of all paths, the consummation of all transformations. After worshipping various deities, after pursuing various lines of discipline either in this birth or in previous births, by the dint of such practices, as a result of the grace of those deities, one gains entry into the *sanctum sanctorum* of Sri Vidya. " Some are after the name of Siva, others are fond of the name of Vishnu but very few are conversant with the names of Lalita " says Lalita Sahasranama. After traversing many paths, this Royal Road comes into sight. After paying homage to the various deities in the ascending cosmic stair of consciousness, one is able to climb up and have a glimpse of this deity at the summit. By pursuing other lines of worship, one aspires to get the famous eight Siddhis as the culmination. But these are the beginnings in the worship of Sri Vidya. In fact, these Siddhis are posited on the outermost periphery of Sri Chakra, which is considered as not different from the great Goddess and Sri Vidya. The Tantra clinches the issue dramatically by proclaiming that either one should be in his last birth or else one should be Siva himself; only then can one get the fifteen-lettered Mantra of the Divine Mother.[1]

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[1] rajyam deyam siro deyam na deya shodasakshari.

[2] Verse 19.

This does not mean that the worshipper of Sri Vidya should arrogate himself to some sort of supermanhood. Rather the weight of the Divine's choice should lay heavily on him. He should dedicate himself exclusively to the pursuit of the Vidya and make supreme effort for progress. If he misses the valuable opportunity given to him, he becomes a *bhrashta*, one who has fallen in his Sadhana. His progress is deferred for the time being and he has to make again the ascent which is not easy.

Such is the greatness of the Vidya of the Divine Mother that it is mentioned without any description or attribute. It is simply called Sri Vidya, Sri being a prefix to denote auspiciousness. It is *the* knowledge, the only knowledge that matters. The Tantric holds that knowledge about sculpture, etc. is no knowledge at all; Sri Vidya leading to liberation, *moksha*, is alone fit to be called as the Knowledge.[1]

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[1] Yasya no pascimam janma yadi va sankarah svayam
tenaiva labhyate vidya srimat pancadasakshari.

THE DEITY

The Deity adored through Sri Vidya is the Divine Mother. She is the Primordial Mother, not only of all the created beings in the universes but also of all Gods and Goddesses. She is their mainstay and sustenance. She is the Aditi of the Vedas, the unslayable Cow of Radiance, the infinite Mother. She leads the Aryan, the indefatigable toiler, the ardent aspirant to the summits of Light and Delight. Her auspicious glory is proclaimed through the children of the triple universe for verily they are her extensions, *santana*.[2] The One, she has become the Many. The Nameless, she has a thousand names. And the first name by which she is called by the myriads of the universes she has created, is *sri mata* the Mother.

She is also the Great Queen *sri maharajni*, presiding over the cosmos with her consort, the Supreme Lord. All the myriads of gods and goddesses derive their authority and power from this Supreme Goddess, Her Most Imperial Majesty, *para bhattarika*, and function in Her name. The Powers that reign over the cosmos do so with the grace of this Empress of all sovereignties, *rajarajeshwari*.

The Tantra conceives the Supreme that is Transcendental Absolute, immutable, ineffable as Effulgence *prakasa*. When it is self-moved to manifest something of itself, there is a deliberation, *vimarsa* on itself. This deliberation which is the precursor of all manifestation is the Supreme Goddess. This deliberation takes the form of an impulsion, a desire, *kama*. This desire, again, is a division, a digit *kala* of the Divine and so is the Goddess known as *kamakala*. Kamakala is the Divine Desire in the macrocosm. It manifests as the digit of the Eternal in the microcosm.[1] Not only that, it becomes the digit of the Divine in every God and Goddess. It sustains the lotus-born Brahma in his act of creation, the lotus-eyed Vishnu in the protection of the universes, indeed, sustains them both at the time of dissolution.[2] Kamakala is the Mother of Love, Kameshwari. From the prime Desire have sprung forth in the world, consideration, solicitude, attachment, affection and love.

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[1] na silpadijnanayukte vidvat sabdah prayujyate
mokshaikahcturvidya sa srividyaiva na samsayah.

[2] Verse 1.

The impulse of prime Desire creates a throb *spanda* which vibrates as *nada*. This *nada* concentrates itself into a point *bindu* which in turn, turns itself into three bindus, forming itself into a triangle. This triangle is the prime triangle in the Sri Chakra, the *yoni*, the source of all manifestation, the base triangle *moola trikona* in the subtle body, the Muladhara centre where the Serpent Power, Kundalini Sakti, lies coiled, ready to be awakened. The triangle represents the threefold aspect, *tripura*, *pura* standing for city, place or field of action. Brahman is threefold, Sat-Chit-Ananda, Truth-Consciousness-Bliss. The life is threefold, *annam*, *prana* and *manas*, physical, vital and mental. The worlds are three. The states are three, *jagrat* waking, *svapna* dream and *sushupti* deep sleep. The forces are three, *iccha*, will, *jnana*, knowledge and *kriya*, action. Thus, the great Goddess who subjects herself to a threefold division is known as Tripura or Tripurasundari. The *Kalika Purana* says that everything about the Goddess is three in number: the triangle, the three girdles of the *Bhupura* in Sri Chakra, her three-lettered Mantra, her three forms, the triple Kundalini Sakti and her creation of the trinity and hence she is known as Tripura.[1] Because she transcends the triad also, her name is Tripura. She exists before the creation of the Trinity, before the three Vedas and in dissolution fills the triple worlds.[2] Thus she is known as *Mahatripurasundari*, the Beauty *par excellence* in the triad.

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[1] Verse 20.

[2] Verse 18.

Her another name is *Lalita*. She is the Mother of Grace who has her play far transcending all the worlds, *lokanatitya lalate*. When Manmatha, the God of Love, disturbed the penance of Siva, Siva in anger reduced him to ashes. A Gandharva, in fun, gave life to the heap of ashes which became the formidable Bhandasura. The ashes were the resultant of distorted love working against Divine's Law and the Divine's wrath on it. And so, an Asura was born. Lalita, as the Mother of Grace and Love, had to vanquish Bhandasura, Love in its most distorted and ugly form, and re-establish true love in the universe. This is the real significance of the exploits of Lalita and her hosts against Bhandasura and his men, which are vividly portrayed in the *Brahmanda Purana*.

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[1] Trikonam mandalam casya bhupuram ca trirekhakam
mantro'pi tryaksharah proktah tatha rupatrayam punah.
trividha kundah saktih tridevanam ca srshtaye
sarvam trayam trayam yasmat tasmattu tripura mata.

[2] trimurtisargacca purabhavatvat
trayimayatvacca puraiva devyah.
laye trilokya api purakatvat
prayo'mbikayas tripureti nama.

Thus, the deity of Sri Vidya is variously known as Sri Mata, Kamakala, Kameshwari, Rajarajeshwari, Lalita, Mahatripurasundari, Para Bhattarika. But she is not worshipped alone. She is always thought of as united with her Lord, Siva. The Sri Chakra is the one body of the Siva-couple, *sricakram sivayor vapuh* and of the letters of the Sri Vidya Mantra some belong to Siva, some to Sakti and the rest to both of them. No aspirant can make progress in the Sadhana of Sri Vidya if he does not think of Kameshwari along with Kameshwara, the two in one form. She is ever installed in the heart-seat of Siva and is full of Siddhis that belong to the sovereign realms of Siva-state. The Lord of the three worlds guards the knowledge leading to her, the knowledge which manifests her play.[1] With her gaze of desire, the lady-love of the Supreme sports in the heart of the Omniscient. And in the womb of her sprouting smile she bears the bliss which is the root-cause of the manifestation of the universe.[2] Desiring the well-being of the whole world, she does not brook the confusion of Dharmas. Equal to all beings, from each one she uplifts the essence of their being and reigns victoriously.[3]

POWERS AND PERSONALITIES

Many are the Powers and Personalities of this Godhead. She is served by sixty four crores of the great yoginis, *maha catusshashthi koti yogini gana sevita*, says *Lalita Sahasranama*. The Sri Chakra is the abode of all her Powers. For each of the nine chakras, there is a mistress, a Power of the Divine Mother, a Tripura deity. Again, her fifteen lettered mantra is presided over by her fifteen Powers, *tithinityas*, the days of the fortnight.

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[1] Verse 19.
[2] Verse 16.
[3] Verse 17.

Apart from these, three of her great Personalities stand out to lead the aspirant on the path of Sri Vidya. They are *Bala*, *Mantrini* and *Dandanatha*. For one who directly worships the Divine Mother, the grace of these Personalities is assured. It may happen that an aspirant has not got the competency to be directly launched into the worship of the Divine Mother. Then the worship of these Personalities is fruitful in preparing him for initiation in the Sri Vidya lore, as the favour of these deities bring him near to the precincts of the Divine Mother.

Bala is a little girl, daughter of the Divine Mother. She is known as Bala Tripurasundari and shares all the characteristics of her mother. Her Mantra consists of three seed-sounds *Aim Klim Sauh* and is known as Sri Vidya. They are the seed-letters *bijaksharas* of the three *kutas* and become amplified as the fifteen-lettered *pancadasi*. They are conjoined with the three *kutas* peaks of *pancadasi* to form the Mantra known as *saubhagya vidya*. Bala being a little girl is easily approachable. She has not the formidable majesty of her mother and her presence does not strike awe in the mind of the worshipper. In the worship of the Divine as a child, the filial feelings of the sadhaka have full play. He loves, caresses, chides, fondles and has the Divine as his playmate. Krishna is adored as Balakrishna, Kumara as Balasubrahmanya. Likewise, Goddess Tripurasundari is worshipped as Bala. It is common in the Sri Vidya tradition to initiate a neophyte into the Bala Mantra first and afterwards lead him to the great Mantra of the Divine Mother. It is also a fact of spiritual experience that in the initial stages of the sadhana of Sri Vidya, the Divine Mother reveals herself as Bala.

Mantrini represents the knowledge-aspect of the Divine Mother, while Dandanatha denotes her strength aspect. Mantrini is the Counsellor, Minister to Rajarajeshwari. Her sagacity and wisdom she gives to her worshippers. She is dark and is known as Shyamala or Rajashyamala. She is the Matangi of the Dasha Maha Vidyas. Her worship leads one to the worship of Sri Vidya either in this birth or in subsequent births.

Dandanatha, as her name indicates is the Supreme Commander of Rajarajeshwari's armed forces. She is the Might of the Mother. She is known as Varahi, the great consumer. She destroys the hostile forces and infuses strength in the worshipper. She corresponds to Bagalamukhi of the Dasha Maha Vidyas, one who can paralyse anything *sarva stambhanakari*. She also leads her worshipper to the worship of Sri Vidya ultimately.

These are the three great Personalities of the Divine Mother. In the case of those who are able to approach the Divine Mother direct, these three deities of their own accord shower their grace on the sadhaka.

THE MANTRA

The quickest way to have a realisation of the Deity is through its Mantra. Mantra is not a mere arrangement of letters. When the Transcendent Brahman desires to manifest out of its own volition, there is a stir, a throb which starts a series of vibrations. These take the form of sound, *nada* which is the origin of the whole creation. Each deity has its own *nada* lines of vibration in the high supernal. The Rishi hears in his occult audition the characteristic *nada* and when it is transmitted in the articulate tongue, it becomes the Mantra. The Mantra enshrines the deity and reveals the deity to the earnest seeker. The Mantra is not, as popularly held, a means to contact the deity. It is the deity itself. It is the sound-body of the deity, having a remarkable correlation with the body of the deity that is contemplated in Dhyana. For instance, Siva is said to have five faces and his Mantra is the five lettered *pancakshari*. Skanda has six faces and his Mantra *saravanabhava*, has six letters. Vishnu in his twelve aspects of Kesava, Narayana etc. has the twelve-lettered *dwadasakshari*. Chandika who has nine aspects as Nava Durgas has her famous *navakshari*. But nowhere the concordance is so close, the identification so complete as between Mahatripurasundari and her Mantra.

The Tantra records the names of twelve pioneers as the foremost worshippers of Sri Vidya. They are Manu, Chandra, Kubera, Lopamudra, Manmatha, Agastya, Nandikesa, Surya, Vishnu, Skanda, Siva and Durvasa. It will be observed that the list is comprised of men, *manava*, accomplished beings, *siddha* and gods *divya*. Each one of them has founded a school of Sri Vidya. The Sri Vidya Mantra in each case is different. Out of these the Vidyas of Manmatha and Agastya are much in vogue amongst the worshippers. The Vidya of Manmatha or Kamaraja Vidya is known as *kadi*, because the Mantra begins with *ka* and that of Agastya is known as *hadi* as the Mantra begins with *ha*. Which is superior, *kadi* or *hadi*? There has always been some argument about it. The Tantric works mention both the Vidyas with equal regard. Some worship the Divine Mother through Hadi Mantra while others through Kadi Mantra. Without counting the letters that are repeated, the effective letters in Hadi are five, while in Kadi they are seven. The Mother reigns as *Nadakala* in the seven letters just the same way as in the five letters.[1] Even so, as the Mother of Love is invoked, the Kamaraja Vidya, the Mantra promulgated by the god of love, Kama, the Kadi Vidya has gained much currency and prominence, *tatra kadir yatha para*. The three-hundred names of Lalita, *Lalita Trisati* are arranged in the order of the letters of Kadi Vidya and so is this *Mahamanustava*.

KADI VIDYA

The subject of our study, Kadi Vidya, consists of fifteen letters. It is known as Panchadasi. If a secret seed-sound Bijakshara is added at the end, it becomes *shodasi*, the sixteen-lettered Mantra. Then there is the twentyeight lettered *mahashodasi*, comprised of eight Bijaksharas, the Panchadasi, and the first five Bijaksharas in the reverse order, *viloma*. If each of the three parts of Panchadasi is prefixed with the corresponding Bijakshara of the Bala Mantra, we have the Saubhagya Vidya Mantra which is the giver of all auspiciousness.[2]

The seer of the Mantra, the Rishi is Dakshinamurti, the Supreme Master of masters, the Sovereign of the silent ones. The metre, *Chandas*, is Pankti and goddess, Devata, is Lalita Tripurasundari.[3] The fifteen-lettered Mantra consists of three parts, *khandas*. They are also known as summits or peaks, *kutas*. The first *kuta* consisting of five letters is known as *vagbhava*, born out of Vak, the original primordial word. The second *kuta* consisting of six letters is celebrated as *kamaraja*, the king of love. The third and last *kuta* of four letters is famous as *Sakti*, force. When the manifestation is about to start, there is a vibration, *nada*, culminating as the prime *vak*, then the impulsion, desire, love, *kama* and then the Force which acts for the manifestation. Thus the three *khandas* of the Mantra represent the three stages of manifestation and in the sadhaka of the Mantra these stages repeat to effectuate the manifestation. The first letter of the Vidya, *ka*, is the seed-sound of Brahma and Saraswati and represents the word which has become the world.[1] Through the Mantra which is the articulated expression of the Vak, the wise man gets accomplishment in learning and the whole knowledge contained in the Mantra opens out before him.[2]

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[1] Verse 27.

[2] Verse 25.

[3] Verse 26.

The Light of lights submits itself to a threefold classification as Moon, Sun and Fire for the purposes of manifestation. So the first *khanda* of the Mantra is known as *somakhanda*, the part pertaining to the moon, the second as *suryakhanda*, pertaining to the sun and the third as *agni-khanda*, pertaining to the fire. The relevant deities presiding over the three parts are Kameshwari, Bhagamalini and Vajreshwari and they occupy the primary triangle *Yoni* in the Sri Chakra. In the human body, the Somakhanda corresponds to the head-centre, Sahasrara, the Suryakhanda to the heart-centre, Anahata and the Agnikhanda to the centre at the bottom of the spine, Muladhara. Thus, the sadhaka during contemplation establishes an identification between his body and the Mantra.

We have already said that there is a very close correlation between the Mantra and the body of the Deity. The body of the Deity is actually constituted of the fifteen letters of Panchadasi.[1] The first *kuta*, Vagbhava, is her face; the second *kuta* Kamaraja is the portion below her neck upto the hip and the third *kuta* Sakti is the portion of the body below the hip. Her body-frame is verily the three *kutas* of the Mulamantra, *mulakutatraya kalevara*.[2]

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[1] Verse 11.

[2] Verse 28.

Again, the crowning letter of each *kuta* is the Bijakshara *hrim*. We should understand the significance of this seed-sound for getting at the purport of the Sri Vidya Mantra.

HRIM

Hrim enjoys the same reputation in the Tantric lore as Aum in the Vedic and Vedantic wisdom. In fact it is known as the Tantric Pranava.[3] It is denoted by the word *maya*. Maya is that which measures out from the immeasurable, the appellation of Bhuvaneshwari, the Sovereign of the worlds, who has created the worlds and entered into them. Hrim is the Mantra of Bhuvaneshwari, one of the Dasha Maha Vidyas. It is the one-lettered Mantra of the Mother who has taken a vow, as it were, to perform the act of withdrawing and putting forth the triple world.[4] Hrim is also known as *lajja bija*. *Lajja* means bashfulness or shyness. It means that things have not come out fully in the open, there is some

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[1] Verse 26.

[2] Srimadvagbhavakutaikasvarupamukhapankaja
kanthadhah katiparyantamadhyakutasvarupini
saktikutaikatapannakatyadhobhagadharini
mulamantratmika mulakutatrayakalevara

—*Lalita Sahasranama*.

[3] Verse 29.

[4] Verse 15.

sankoca, shrinking, closing, restriction. Thus, the *lajja bija* Hrim denotes a manifestation which is not yet complete and full. A manifestation with further potentialities, a progressive unfoldment is indicated. The creation starts with the Word, with the Tantric Pranava, Hrim. Only by means of Hrim, the Divine Mother holds and sustains in space the universe as an open manifestation.[1] Again, Hrim is called *hrllekha*, the *lekha* from *hrt*, the streak from the heart. We have said that the Goddess as Kamakala creates the world. The Divine desires for the creation; and the creation also desires for the Divine. Having its root above, the Divine Desire, *kamakala* spreads its branches down below. In response, from the heart of creation surges forth a desire, an aspiration, a yearning for the Divine, a *streak of line* rising to join its parent Point. This is *hrllekha* the seed-sound Hrim. With the Word, Hrim, the world is created. The vibrations of Hrim rise in a crescendo in space, break into peals of *nada*, reverberate throughout the worlds and come back to the Source as a resonance from the heart of creation. Thus the Bijakshara Hrim represents the ardent aspiration rising from the heart, the yearning and love for the Divine. It is also the Primordial Word, the opulence of the creator of the worlds, the concentrated Bliss of the Divine Mother.[2]

There are three Hrims in the Mantra, one at the end of each *kuta*. Each of them grants to the seeker one of the three knowledges. What are these three knowledges? The existence is triune—God, World and Soul. God, the sole Reality, is the substance and support and directing intelligence of its own formation in the shape of World and Soul. There are countless worlds and innumerable souls. These are the signifying factors and God is the One signified in all of them. To know the world as it appears to our imperfect understanding is a partial knowledge which ignores the substance. This partial knowledge is a half-truth and is mistaken for the full Truth. This mistake is *ajnana*, ignorance. By contemplating on the Hrim of the first *kuta* man the victor conquers this ignorance pertaining to the world[1] and true knowledge dawns on him.[2] The Hrim of the second *kuta* brings into full play the knowledge pertaining to God and World, how God is the root-substance of all existence.[3] The Hrim of the third *kuta* leads one to a total knowledge, *sakala jnana*, an integral truth, about God, World and Soul, that God the Self of all existence is not different from its own formation as world-existence and soul-existence.[4] Thus the three Hrims confer on the seeker the true knowledge about the World, about the World and God and about the World, God and Soul.

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[1] Verse 20.

[2] Verse 21.

Again, the Divine Mother Eternal subjects herself in manifestation to the conception of Time. She translates herself in time as the days or *tithis*, as the moon and her fifteen digits. She is the moon in her fulness while the digits are her aspects, called *tithi nityas*. The Sanskrit word *nitya* means eternal as well as *diem*. These fifteen Nityas form the fifteen-lettered Panchadasi which is the sound-body of the Divine Mother who is the sixteenth *shodasi*. A meditation to be done along with the japa of the Mantra is to think of every day as the form in Time of the Divine Mother.

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[1] Verse 15.
[2] Verse 28.
[3] Verse 29.
[4] Verse 30.

THE GURU

If the Mantra is the sound-body of the Deity, who can reveal the Mantra except the Deity itself? Ultimately, it is the Deity that leads the devotee to itself. But all are not in a position to get the direct guidance from the Deity. Certain rare souls who come to earth as already prepared or perfected beings need no outside help. They rely on their inner Voice, on the God within them and advance very rapidly. But for all the others the Deity acts through a human agency, the Guru.

Knowledge is handed over without a break through means of initiation. And for this perpetual movement, continuous guidance, the Tantra gives the name *augha*, flood or current. The Aughas are three in number, Divyaugha, Siddhaugha and Manavaugha, the divine guides, the accomplished or semi-divine companions on the way and the mortal mentors. If man is ready, he is caught in this current and led by the current without any effort. When the seeker is earnest, the Guru appears on the scene to guide him.

So the Guru is not a mere human being. To mistake him as such is a sure way to spiritual downfall. He is the delegated power of the godhead on earth and to the disciple he is God himself. If a Mantra has to be effective, it has to be initiated through a Guru. Then, by the grace of the Guru all follows. If the disciple is destined to advance far ahead, the Guru's grace and the Mantra's force lead him on to further Gurus, so that he may acquire the requisite knowledge at various stages.[1] But a Guru should be a Mantra Siddha; he should have realised the Mantra that he imparts to the disciple. Only a lamp which is burning can light another lamp. In such a Guru who has realised the Mantra in himself lies concealed the force of the Mantra. When it is sown in the disciple, as the disciple does the japa of the Mantra it grows and bears fruit. Mantras learnt from books are useless burdens carried in one's head. One perceives not, neither does one know the essentials.[2]

How can Siddhi in the Mantra be attained? The disciple should be pure in mind imbibing all the various qualities of the elders in the field. He should be drenched in the compassionate gaze of the Guru. More than his personal effort, the Guru's Grace accomplishes the sadhana. He should rely entirely on the Guru and be a constant servitor at his lotus-feet. To such a disciple comes the great Siddhi.[3]

In the cult of Sri Vidya the importance of the Guru cannot be overemphasized, where so much depends upon the guidance of the Guru and the grace of the Goddess.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DEITY

There are certain characteristics of the Goddess one should know. Lalita is all red. Her colour is red like the light of a thousand rising suns, *udyat bhanu sahasrabha* and her garments are red in colour. Red is the colour of Desire, of passion, of love, of *rajo guna*. It is meet that Lalita, the Prime Desire, the initial Activity is conceived as all red. Also, red is the colour of Dawn, the dispeller of darkness and the harbinger of light. Lalita wields in her four hands the noose, the goad, the sugarcane bow and five flower arrows. Love is the noose and wrath is the goad. The sugarcane bow is the mind and the five arrows are the five *tanmatras*, sound, touch, form, relish and flavour.[1] Her abode is in the Sri Chakra, the transcript of the Transcendent, in the jewelled mansion of the illumined thought-mind, Chintamani Griha, amidst lotus groves and *kadamba* trees which signify the manifold creation, surrounded by the vast immortal consciousness, *Sudha sindhu*. There, in the Sri Chakra, in the point from where the lines of creation emerge, in the Bindu, she is seated on a cot, the legs of which are Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra and Isana and the plank of which is Sadasiva. She is not seated alone. She is with her Lord Kameshwara, the two in one, in eternal bliss. Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Isana and Sadasiva are in charge of the five acts, *srshti*, creation, *sthiti*, maintenance, *samhara*, withdrawal, *tirodhana*, concealment and *anugraha*, taking up again in grace, the task of creation. But they are the five corpses, *panca preta*, lifeless inert parts of the cot on which the life-giver, the pure consciousness, Lalita is seated. She is the Life of life, the Transcendent Existence, Consciousness, Bliss.

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[1] Verse 10.

[2] Verse 32.

[3] Verse 31.

THE TWO PATHS

The Tantra recognises the deficiencies of the individual and has devised the paths of sadhana accordingly.

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[1] ragaswarupa pasadhya krodhakarankusojjvala
manorupekshukodanda pancatanmatrasayaka

—*Lalita Sahasranama*.

It speaks of three types, *pasu*, the animal, *vira*, the warrior and *divya*, the godly. The *pasu* is one who has predominantly physical leanings, *vira*, has a well-developed vital, while the *divya* type is evolved enough to live in his mental and higher mental being. The doctrine is that he who begins as a *pasu* flowers very shortly as a *vira* or *divya* type according to his temperament. The *vira's* is the left hand path, Vama Marga, while the *divya* treads on the right hand path, Dakshina Marga. In the Vama Marga, progress is sought by the very things that degrade the soul. It is like walking on a razor's edge, *asidhara vrata*. Only the valiant ones, strong in heart and firm in faith, can follow this path without any mishap. The Vamachara has been much misunderstood and maligned mainly because of the ignorance of the significance of the audaciously misleading nomenclature that is used. This is purposely done to confound the critic and confuse the nonbeliever. When the follower of the Vamachara talks of drinking Madhu, he means experiencing the basic Bliss in everything, the essence of existence, Rasa, the very sap of life.

Vama Marga is also known as *Kulacara* where the stress is laid on the waking up of the Kundalini and its being led to Sahasrara to join with the Siva there. Dakshina Marga is also famous as *Samayacara*. Here the path is through knowledge, through inner worship. The Goddess is worshipped as Samaya equal in all respects, *samam yati*, with her consort Siva. In the cult of Sri Vidya, both the left-hand and the right-hand paths are followed. The Goddess is in both the paths, *savyapasavya margastha*, and is worshipped by both the practices *dakshinadakshinaradhya*. Kaula Marga or Kulachara devolves round external worship and the personal effort of the sadhaka while the Samayachara is successful by inner contemplation and complete surrender to the Deity. In Samayachara, the Goddess as Samaya reveals on the path at the proper time the Supreme to be experienced. When Kulachara is done, the portion of the Divine Force in oneself manifests marvellous things.[1] The portion of the Divine Force inside oneself is that of Lalita whose strength of beauty vivifies the pride of Kama. Just as she brought to life Kama burnt by Siva, she is capable of establishing immortality in the mortal man when she is released from the base-lotus as the Kundalini.[2]

BASIC REQUISITES

Whatever the path the aspirant follows, there are certain basic requisites for the sadhana to be successful. The Goddess of Sri Vidya is the Mother of Beauty and Bliss, the Mother of Love and Grace. One who follows the path of Sri Vidya should be a worshipper of beauty and grace. He should reject ugliness in all its forms. He should not only shun the outer ugliness but also ugliness in thought, word and deed. He should not court squalor and poverty as part of spiritual discipline, neither should he crave for misery and suffering as a part of his martyrdom to reach the Divine. Fasts and similar self-mortifications have no place in this sadhana. The sadhaka of Sri Vidya is always cheerful and exudes cheer all around. He always looks at the brighter side of things. His robust optimism and unfailing faith in the Goddess turns difficulties into opportunities, and failures into successes. He has no lure for the lucre, but when the Goddess gives, he knows how to enjoy the riches. The path of Sri Vidya is the sun-lit path strewn with the flowers of happiness, joy, beauty, and grace. Now will be understood the Tantric saying that the Upasaka in Sri Vidya should bathe nicely, dress in fineries, eat delicious dishes, take the fragrant *tambula* and with a heart full of trust and cheer contemplate on the Goddess.

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[1] Verse 22.

[2] Verse 23.

The sadhaka of Sri Vidya should treat the women-folk with great consideration and respect. When the woman is ill-treated, from there the Goddess flees. In fact, the sadhaka should love the women, not with lust but as a child would love its mother. For all the women in the world are the embodiments of the Divine Mother, *striyah samastah sakala jagatsu*. This is the secret of *suvasini puja* which finds an important place in Sri Vidya worship.

Again, the sadhaka should lead a life of absolute sincerity. He should reject totally from his being all hypocrisy, cunning and deceit. For that he should extricate himself from the mire of mental life enslaved to the senses. The mind has its prejudices, preferences, preconceived notions. The mind should be quiet; sincerity leads to the openness and receptivity of the mind. Then without his volition, the sadhaka becomes the servitor of the feet of the Goddess.[1] Such a one the Divine Mother takes hold alive and keeps him in the net of her feet as a spider would its prey and in time claims him as her own.[2] Then the sadhaka feels that without seeking the Divine Path, he has been led to it as if by an accident. He knows nothing. But she the great knower guards him fully.[3]

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[1] Verse 4.

[2] Verse 5.

[3] Verse 6.

THE METHOD

With these basic requisites, if one follows the method one is sure of success. The method is external worship, or Mantra Sadhana culminating in inner contemplation and meditation. It is fashionable to decry external worship as a crutch for the limping novice. At the most it is considered as a concession granted to the handicapped beginner. But the real Tantric knows the importance of external worship. It is necessary at one stage or the other in the sadhana and afterwards it is carried on in some form or the other, though not in elaborate details throughout the course of the sadhana. The Tantra has great faith in the Spirit; but pins its faith to the material world as well, which the Spirit has created and pervaded. While gaining God one should not lose the world. The sadhana will remain partial if there is no link between the inner gains one makes and the outer life one leads. The link is supplied by external worship. It is powerful and effective and if done with the true consciousness, it intensifies devotion and stabilises the inner realisation in outer conditions. It gives a field for the manifestation of inner gains and makes the sadhana integral.

In the outer worship, the Divine Presence is sought in an image, in a sculptured stone of the temple or in the Sri Chakra, the Form-pattern of the Goddess. When properly installed, an image becomes a living Presence to the worshipper. Similarly, the Formless Divine can be sensed in the sculptured form in a temple. It is a conscious Presence and inculcates the true consciousness in the worshipper.[1] The Sri Chakra is famous as the Form-pattern of the Goddess, just as Sri Vidya Mantra is her Sound-body. There the great Lalita abides with all her powers and personalities. There is a special method of worship prescribed in the case of Sri Chakra which is known as *navavarana puja*. The nine *avaranas* or veils are the nine chakras in the Sri Chakra which have a close correspondence to the levels of being in the aspirant. If the worship is done properly it lifts the aspirant towards the higher altitudes of his being, ultimately towards the supreme consciousness.

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[1] Verse 3.

Now coming to Mantra sadhana, it is true that the Mantra itself does the sadhana, especially when the Mantra is received in initiation from a Mantra Siddha. But the sadhaka has to nurture it constantly, by *reliving* the great moment of initiation. In all other cases, *japa*, slow, scarcely audible recital of the Mantra, backed up by attention should be undertaken to evoke the presence enshrined in the Mantra. But unfortunately in most cases Japa degenerates into a mechanical routine, a lifeless repetition. The mouth goes on muttering while the rest of the being is engrossed in its own accustomed rounds. One should literally put one's heart into the Japa of the Mantra if the Mantra has to respond as a living Presence. The Vedic Rishis call the Mantra as carved out of the heart, *hrda yat tashtan mantran*. The Mantra should actually rise from the depth of one's heart and be accompanied by the four processes of call, surrender, prayer and waiting upon the Deity.

Just as a person would call another person by his name, the aspirant utters the Mantra from the heart and calls the Goddess to give him protection. The first obsession is fear and it is created by thinking of a second other than oneself. Fear is destroyed immediately by the Goddess extending her protection which acts like an armour around the being of the aspirant. When a call is made for protection, the aspirant is immediately wrapped in the Mother's consciousness. But there is no use in calling if he does not know how to submit himself to the call. Again with the Mantra from the heart the aspirant surrenders his entire being to the enveloping consciousness.[1]

Having got into this consciousness, if he has to retain it, he has to reject all that opposes this state. He has no power to do this by himself. He has to seek the help of the Goddess. There is a veil of illusion thrown over his eyes preventing him from seeing the true nature of things. With the Mantra welling up from his heart, he begs of the Goddess, prays to her to remove the veil from his eyes, so that he becomes enabled to see without any illusion all her verities.[2]

Then the aspirant looks within himself where everything is covered by the darkness of ignorance. With the Mantra from the heart he approaches the Goddess and waits upon her in adoration in order that the darkness inside him may be removed. *Upasana* literally means "having one's seat near." The secret of *upasana* is to approach the Divine and wait upon it in adoration without impatience for the transformation to come in due course.[3]

A Mantra sadhana so done leads the aspirant gradually to the path of meditations.

MEDITATIONS

The goddess of Sri Vidya can be contemplated upon as the Divine Mother of exquisite charm and singular beauty. The aspirant thinks of the impenetrable ramparts of darkness inside him and how they are demolished in an instant by the smile of the Mother. He meditates on the lustre of her round face which makes his heart pure and unsullied.[1]

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[1] Verse 12.

[2] Verse 13.

[3] Verse 14.

Or he thinks of the Goddess as having the marvellous space as her body and the one immutable sound, *nada*, as the regulating breath. He meditates on her in his heart-space as the one who is ever-vigilant in all hearts, untouched by darkness.[2]

Or else, he contemplates on the Light spiritual emanating from the feet of the Mother, the Light that courses around him and has its play descending from high above his head.[3]

This in sum is the secret doctrine of Sri Vidya, the great knowledge that leads to Liberation—liberation, not elsewhere, but here in this very existence. As the Tantra says: "Very few in this world are conversant with the Discipline of Sri Vidya; amongst them almost all know in a general way. The one who knows the intricacies is difficult to find."[4] We are fortunate that these intricacies are brought out concisely in this Laud of the Great Mantra, *Mahamanustava* of Sri Kapali Sastriar.

S. SHANKARANARAYANAN.

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[1] Verse 7.

[2] Verse 8.

[3] Verse 9.

[4] ye ca jananti loke'smin srividyacakravedinah
samanyavedinah sarve viseshajno' tidurlabhah.

महामनुस्तवः

आर्यां मातरमाद्यां
　　त्रिभुवनसन्तानयोगसौभाग्याम् ।
आदिपुरेश्वरमहिषीं
　　ललितां श्रीत्रिपुरसुन्दरीं वन्दे ॥ १ ॥

I bow down to Arya, the Primordial Mother, who has the good fortune of having the denizens of the triple world as her children, to the Queen of the Lord of Adipura, to Lalita, Tripurasundari.

Arya is a Vedic word. It denotes the incessant toil of the ardent aspirant, the traveller on the Path, the relentless fighter against the powers of darkness. The Divine Mother as *Arya* is the Goddess of human journey carrying it forward against all attacks of the hostile forces and she leads the aspirant to the shore beyond darkness. The metre of the verses is also '*Arya.*' As Sri Vidya is the sound-body of the Goddess, the verses are treated as not different from the Divine Mother.

Santana means extension and so offspring. The Divine takes delight in extending itself as the triple world. The Goddess owes her motherhood to the denizens of the triple world, for if the latter were not in existence, she would not be the Mother. So it is her *saubhagya*, good fortune. The poet also hints that he has been worshipping the Mother as *Saubhagya Vidya*.

Adi Pura is the City of Tiruvottiyur (near Madras) —the native place of the author, Sri Kapali Sastriar. The presiding Deity in the temple there is Lalita Tripurasundari with her consort Adipureshwara.

या शैशवात् प्रभृति नः
    सङ्कटबहुलेषु संशयपदेषु ।
अविदितमथवा विदितं
    पातात् पाति स्म गन्तुमिह गम्यम् ॥ २ ॥

Irrespective of whether we were aware or unaware, right from childhood in various difficulties and places of doubt, she guarded us from the fall so that we might reach here the Goal.

The Guiding Grace can act even when the person is unware of its working. At its touch, difficulties are turned into opportunities and tottering doubt into a bedrock of faith.

One who has undergone the necessary preparations in the previous births and is destined to follow the path of Sri Vidya in this birth, he alone gets initiated in the lore of Sri Vidya. So the Goddess nurtures such a person from his very childhood. Because before he has chosen her, she has chosen him to be her devotee.

By the Goal here, Sastriar means his participation in the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the consummation of all his aspirations and yearnings, the culmination of his dedicated journey on the path of the soul's progress.

मूर्तिमपश्यममूर्ते-
रपि यद् देव्याः पुरा शिलाशिल्पे ।
चेतन्त्यथ चेतयन्ती
कृपा हि सेति स्मरामि सुन्दर्याः ॥ ३ ॥

I recollect that it is the grace of Tripurasundari that in olden days I saw in sculptured stone the form of the Goddess, though formless, fully conscious and infusing consciousness in me.

Formerly, when Sastriar was in Tiruvottiyur, he used to visit the temple daily and stand for a while before the Deity doing the japa of the Mantra. To Sastriar the idol in the temple was no sculptured stone. It was the living form of the Mother fully conscious. And the Murti infused the appropriate consciousness in him. Sastriar recollects how at such an early age he was able to perceive concretely the form of the formless Divine and experience its working in him. He gratefully attributes this to the grace of Tripurasundari.

अच्छलजीवनविधये
    तुच्छमनोवासकच्छतो हृत्वा ।
विच्छन्दकनिजपदभू-
    सेविनमेनं व्यधत्त या सदया ॥ ४ ॥

Extricating from the mire of mean mental living for a mode of life without deceit, she with compassion made this being without its volition the servitor of her feet.

Mental living is called mean and is compared to a mire because the mind has its own ideas, preferences, prejudices and preconceived notions. If one has to lead a life of sincerity in thought, word and deed, one has to get out of the mental inhibitions. There is a play on the word ‘jivana’ which means life as well as water. The Goddess extricates the aspirant from the mire and leads him to clean water. As he was extricated out of mental living, Sastriar says he had no mental will or volition, *chanda*. Without his volition, the Mother by her grace and compassion made him her servitor.

जीवग्राहमुदग्रा
निजपदजाले निधाय मां यस्याः ।
जागर्ति स्वीकर्तुं
दृष्टिः कालेऽत्र तन्तुनाभनिभा ॥ ५ ॥

Capturing me alive and keeping me in the web of her feet, her gaze from high, like a spider, is vigilant to claim me as her own at the appropriate time.

The spider with its magnetic gaze draws the prey to the web it has built round it. Once in the web, the prey cannot extricate itself. The spider keeps the prey alive as long as it wishes and then swallows it. The gaze of the Goddess is compared to the action of the spider. Caught in her enthralling gaze, the devotee is helplessly drawn towards her. Sastriar had been drawn like-wise. The Goddess has given him the privilege of her proximity, *samipya*, and she is watching the appropriate time to give him her *sayujya*, the state of absolute oneness with her.

The culmination of worship is that the devotee is swallowed up in the deity. The devotee has no separate existence. He is one with the deity.

अविचिन्वन् देवपथं
यदयं नीतो यदृच्छयेव यया ।
जनमिममज्ञमवन्ती
विज्ञा सा त्रिपुरसुन्दरी विद्या ॥ ६ ॥

The fact that without any seeking on his part, he has been led to the Divine Path as if by accident shows that Tripurasundari as the all-knowing knowledge has been protecting this person who knows nothing.

Tripurasundari as Sri Vidya, the knowledge, is *vijna* one who has the special knowledge. Sastriar calls himself in humility as *ajna*, one who does not know. He did not know at that time that he was destined to tread the Divine Path and so he had no seeking for it.

"As if by accident." It was no accident at all. It was the deliberate design of the Divine Mother that he should tread on the Divine Path.

दुर्गममन्तर्ध्वान्त-
प्राकारं विहसितेन भिन्दन्ती ।
मुखमण्डलभा यस्याः
कुरुते स्वच्छान्तरानिमानस्मान् ॥ ७ ॥

Demolishing the impenetrable rampart of inner darkness by her smile, the lustre of her orb-like face makes us here pure of heart.

Ignorance which is signified by darkness raises a wall between man and God. This wall is like the rampart of an impenetrable fortress. This can be demolished only by the mighty light of the smile of the Goddess.

The gaze penetrates and initiates action. The smile spreads light and assists unfoldment.

The thought of the smile of the Goddess dispels the ignorance inside and the light of her face fills the whole being and makes it clear and clean.

अद्भुतगगनशरीरा-
मेकाक्षरनादसंयतसमीराम् ।
सकलान्तरनिर्णिमिषां
निस्तिमिरामन्तरे परां वन्दे ॥ ८ ॥

I bow down in my heart to the Supreme who is vigilant in all hearts without a tinge of darkness, to the one whose body is the marvellous sky and whose breath is regulated by the one immutable Nada.

The marvellous *Akasa* is the body of the Goddess and primordial Nada vibrating as the one immutable, *akshara*, Hrim is her life-breath. And in the microcosm, her body is the *Dahara akasa*, the heart-space of the beings and her life-breath is the *Hrllekha*, Hrim, the streak rising from the heart of every being.

The vast marvel of macrocosmic proportions can be held by man in his little heart, in the space occupying not more than the size of a thumb.

Nirnimisha, unwinking, that is vigilant, wakeful.

परितो मां विसरन्ती-
मूर्ध्वं मूर्ध्नोऽवतीर्य विलसन्तीम् ।
निध्यायन्नध्यात्मं
भासं पदयोः स्मरामि सुन्दर्याः ॥ ९ ॥

Meditating on the Light Spiritual which streams forth all around me and has its play descending from high above my head, I remember the feet of Tripurasundari.

Here Sastriar relates his constant personal experience. The Light is no ordinary light. It is spiritual. From high above the head it descends down and wraps the being on all its sides. Wherever there is an ascent of one's being in steady aspiration, love or prayer, there is immediately in response a descent of the Divine taking the form of Peace, Force, Light or Delight according to the need of the aspirant. This can be concretely felt as something descending and pouring over the head from high above and enveloping one in its streams.

गुरुचरणै: सङ्क्रमितां
    वर्णमयीमम्बिकामनुध्यायन् ।
गुरुवरसम्पदमलभे
    यदहं सा त्रिपुरसुन्दरीकरुणा ॥ १० ॥

Contemplating on the Mother composed of letters duly transmitted to me by my revered father, I got a wealth of great Masters. This was verily the grace of Tripurasundari.

Sastriar got initiated into Sri Vidya Mantra from his revered father. He used to perform the japa of the Mantra daily in the temple at Tiruvottiyur where one day he met Kavyakantha Vasishta Ganapati Muni who accepted him as his own. Through him he was the recipient of the teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi at Arunachala. From there Sastriar was drawn to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother wherein finally he took refuge. Thus, he got a wealth of great Masters by the grace of the Sri Vidya Mantra initiated by his father, his first Guru.

Varnamayi Ambika, the Mother is composed of the letters of the Sri Vidya Mantra. Her body and the Mantra are not different.

क इति त्रिजगज्जननी-
मादिकलां भुवनशिल्पनिर्मातुः ।
कमलोद्भवस्य कान्ता-
मादौ विद्यारताः प्रभाषन्ते ॥ ११ ॥

The votaries of Sri Vidya at the outset speak of as ‘ ka ’ the beloved of the lotus-born Brahma, the mother of the triple worlds, the prime piece of art of the creator of the world-sculpture.

From this verse onwards till the twenty-fifth verse, the successive letters of the fifteen-lettered *pancadasi* are the first letters of the successive stanzas. The *pancadasi* begins with the letter *ka* which is the seed-sound of Brahma and Saraswati who create the world. The world is spoken of as a sculpture, Brahma as the sculptor and his beloved as his first piece of art.

ए मातरखिलबोधन-
दक्षे रक्षेति नः समाहूय ।
स्वात्मानमर्पयन्ति
प्राज्ञायै तन्त्रवेदिनो विबुधाः ॥ १२ ॥

"O Mother. skilled in all understandings, protect us." Invoking thus, the wise men the knowers of the act surrender themselves to the Great Knower.

E is the second letter of the Mantra. It also serves as a vocative interjection to call the Mother.

The real Tantra, act, is to invoke the divine protection and surrender oneself to it. Only the wise men know this act. They are wise but she is skilled in all knowings and *Prajna* the Great Knower.

ईश्वरि मायिकमखिलं
प्रावरणं चक्षुषोऽपहर मातः ।
येनामायिकमखिलं
प्रेक्षेय तवेति याचते विद्वान् ॥ १३ ॥

"Sovereign Mother, remove all the veils of illusion over my eyes so that I may perceive all of thine devoid of delusion." Thus prays the learned man.

Her verities have no *maya*, illusion. But a thick veil of illusion is drawn over men's eyes preventing right perception. By her grace the veil is removed and one is enabled to have the right perspective.

Verse 7 referred to a wall of ignorance between man and God. This verse speaks of a veil of illusion. The world is no illusion; but it is not able to perceive God because of the intervening illusion.

ललिते भगवति भवती-
मुपगच्छामस्तदत्र कुरु दयितम् ।
अन्तस्सन्तमसं नो
हरेंति देवीमुपासते विज्ञाः ॥ १४ ॥

"*O Lalita, Divine, we have come close to you; so make us dear to you. Remove the darkness inside us.*" *So adore the knowers.*

Upasana, *upasthana* and *upavasa*, the terms used for denoting worship literally mean 'sitting close,' 'standing close' and 'living close.' The worship brings one close to the Deity. Then in that proximity one becomes near and dear to the Deity.

Transformation takes time and the secret of worship is to learn to wait on the Deity in adoration. He who knows how to wait becomes the master of circumstances and time.

ह्रीमिति मातुस्त्रिजगत्-
सङ्कोचविकासतन्त्रदीक्षायाः ।
अक्षरमेकं ध्यायन्
जगदज्ञानस्य जयति ना जेता ॥ १५ ॥

Man, the victor, conquers the ignorance about the world by meditating on the one immutable letter Hrim of the Mother who has taken a vow as it were to be doing the act of withdrawing and unfolding the triple world.

Man is essentially a conqueror. The Hrim of the first *kuta* makes him conquer the ignorance about the world. The world is known but not in relation to the Goddess who goes on withdrawing and unfolding the world. One should know that the Goddess has become the world. As long as one does not know that, any knowledge about the world is partial knowledge and the mistaking of it to be the total knowledge is ignorance.

हसिताङ्कुरस्य गर्भे
विश्वोद्भवमूलसंमदं दधती ।
सर्वज्ञहृदयरमणी
कामाक्षी जयति परमवामाक्षी ॥ १६ ॥

Bearing the basic bliss that brings forth the universe in the womb of her sprouting smile, she who sports in the heart of the Omniscient, the Consort of the Supreme, Kamakshi reigns victorious.

The source of the universe is *Ananda*, bliss. When the Mother smiles, worlds unfold and come into being. Smile is an expression of felicity, happiness. So it is said that the Mother carries in her smile the bliss that produces the worlds.

" *So' kamayata.* He desired, the world came about. *Tadaikshata.* That saw, the creation started."—so says the Upanishad. The prime perception, the prime desire, produces the worlds. So the primordial Goddess is spoken of as one who has desireful eyes, *Kamakshi.* She is the consort of the Supreme and the all-knower carries her in his heart.

सङ्करमक्षममाणा
धर्माणां सर्वलोकहितकामा ।
सारांशमुद्धरन्ती
सर्वस्माज्जयति सर्वभूतसमा ॥ १७ ॥

Not brooking the confusion amongst Dharmas, the well-wisher of the whole world, equal to all beings, uplifts the essentials from every thing and reigns victorious.

The Goddess is the Mother of all, of the knower as well as of the ignorant, of the Gods as well as of the Asuras. She is equal to all beings. Each has his own Dharma. She does not allow confusion. She leads each one according to his own Dharma, uplifting the essentials from everything.

The Vidya of the Goddess, Sri Vidya, is for all who aspire and is catholic in that it shows the way to the aspirant according to his own law of being.

कमलभुवो भवकार्ये
कमलाक्षस्यापि रक्षणे जगताम् ।
विलयेऽप्युभयोर्धात्री
कामकला जयति सर्वदेवकला ॥ १८ ॥

Sustaining the lotus-born Brahma in the act of creation, the lotus-eyed Vishnu in the protection of the worlds, and sustaining them both in dissolution, Kamakala, the Digit of Desire, the portion in every God, reigns victorious.

The Goddess as the Primordial Desire, *Kamakala*, creates through Brahma and protects through Vishnu. At the time of dissolution, she sustains both these Gods. Every God owes his godhood to the portion of her that is present in him.

हरहृदयपीठनिष्ठा
शिवपदसाम्राज्यसिद्धिभूयिष्ठा ।
भुवनत्रयनाथगुप्त-
श्रीविद्याप्रथनलासिनी जयति ॥ १९ ॥

Stabilised in the heart-pedestal of Siva, opulent with the accomplishments of the sovereign Siva-states, the One whose play is promulgated by Sri Vidya, guarded by the Lord of the three worlds, reigns supreme.

The Goddess is inseparable from Siva and her worshippers get all the Siddhis of the realms of Siva. One understands her manifold play only through Sri Vidya. But it is the secret of secrets guarded by no less a person than Siva himself, the Lord of the three worlds.

लज्जाबीजाद् विश्वं
    विततं निर्लज्जमम्बरे दधती।
कामकला ब्रह्माण्डे
    पिण्डाण्डे जयति सैव नित्यकला ॥ २० ॥

Holding out openly through the seed-sound Hrim the expansive universe in the sky, she reigns as Kamakala, the Digit of Desire, in the macrocosm. It is she again who reigns as the eternal portion in the microcosm.

Hrim is called *lajja bija*, because the Sanskrit word for *lajja*, shyness, is *hri*. It denotes a shyness, *sankoca*, a reserve and indicates a progressive unfoldment.

Nirlajjam, unabashed. It is an open fact that the expansive universe is held in space by the Goddess. There is no secret about it.

She who is *Kamakala* becomes the eternal portion in each being. Life is worth-living because each has in him a portion of the eternal Divine.

ह्रीमिति हृदयाभ्युदयां
रेखां वृहदूर्ध्वमूलकामकलाम् ।
हृल्लेखां भुवनेश्वर-
सम्पदमेकाग्रसंमदां चिनुमः ॥ २१ ॥

We gather in ourselves the wealth of the Lord of the worlds, the concentrated Bliss, Hrim, the hrllekha, the streak of line rising from the heart, the kamakala having its root above in the Vast.

The prime Desire is born in the Vast that is Truth, *Satyam Brhat.* Having its root there, it spreads its branches below in creation. In response the desire towards the Divine rises as a streak from the heart of creation. This is *Hrllekha.*

समये समया परमं
साक्षादुपजीव्यमध्वनीक्षयते ।
चरिते तु कुलाचारे
प्रथयति चित्राणि परमशक्तिकला ॥ २२ ॥

The Goddess who is unified with her Lord shows, on the path, the Supreme to be directly experienced at the appropriate time. When kulacara is practised, the portion of the Supreme Force manifests marvellous things.

There are two paths famous as *kulacara* and *samayacara*. In *kulacara*, external worship and the personal exertion of the sadhaka find an important place. The sadhaka exerts himself and tries to uplift his soul through the very things that degrade it. By his personal effort of *tapasya*, he raises the Kundalini Sakti coiled up in his Muladhara and leads her to meet her consort Parasiva in the thousand-petalled head-lotus Sahasrara. When this takes place, the Kundalini who is the *amsa*, portion, of the Supreme Force, manifests miraculous siddhis in the sadhaka. There is a danger that the sadhaka may rest content with those things and not proceed further.

In *samayacara*, the emphasis is on inner worship and complete surrender to the Divine Sakti. The sadhaka does not worry about the result. He relies completely on the Divine Mother. At the appropriate time she reveals to him the Supreme of her own accord. Till then the sadhaka waits on her in adoration.

Samaye means 'in *samayacara* as well as 'in time'.' *Samaya*, the Goddess who is equal with Siva.

कन्दर्पदर्पजीवन-
सौन्दर्यबलाऽन्तरङ्गशक्तिकला ।
पदजलजातप्रभवा
प्रभवति मर्त्येऽमरत्वमाधातुम् ॥ २३ ॥

The Digit of the inner Force arising from the foot-lotus, vivifying the pride of Kama by the strength of its beauty is capable of establishing immortality in the mortal.

The inner Force is the Kundalini rising from the foot-lotus, Muladhara. When the Kundalini is awakened, the Serpent-Power goes up and joins with Siva in the head-lotus, Sahasrara, drenching the whole being of the sadhaka with immortal Bliss. By this process can immortality be established in the mortal being.

Kundalini is the force of Lalita who gave life to the pride of Kama when vanquished by Siva. She brought to life Kama who was reduced to ashes by Siva. As Kundalini is the Goddess in the form of Serpent Power it is possible for her to establish immortality in the mortal as she did in the case of Kama.

लभ्या वाणी विष्णो-
र्दयिताऽपि चरा स्थिरा च यत्नेन ।
परमार्थबद्धदीक्षैः
परस्य शक्तिस्तु तत्प्रसादेन ॥ २४ ॥

Saraswati can be obtained; and Vishnu's beloved, ever on the move can be fixed by effort but the force of the Supreme can be attained by those who are resolved to obtain the supreme purpose only by her grace.

By her worship, knowledge is got and even the fickle wealth can be made to stay permanently with a little effort. But if one is intent on getting the Supreme Purpose one gets it only by her grace. Sri Vidya grants knowledge and wealth to its devotees; that is normal. But if the seeker aspires for the Supreme Goal, that too is made possible by her Grace. Her Grace effects what is beyond the reach of human effort.

ह्रीङ्कारत्रितयशिर-
स्त्रिकूटमुखमध्यपादवर्णमयीम् ।
ज्ञानत्रयशक्तिगर्भां
निर्भरसौभाग्यसुन्दरीं वन्दे ॥ २५ ॥

I bow down to the reliable Saubhagya Sundari impregnated with the force of the triple knowledge made up of the letters of the three kutas which are headed by the triple Hrim and which are her face, middle and feet.

With the first letter of this verse, the Panchadasi Mantra becomes complete.

The Mantra is *ka e i la hrim ha sa ka ha la hrim sa ka la hrim.*

कएईलह्रीं हसकहलह्रीं सकलह्री

The Saubhagya Vidya Mantra is *Aim ka e i la hrim klim ha sa ka ha la hrim sauh sa ka la hrim.*

ऐं कएईलह्रीं क्लीं हसकहलह्रीं सौः सकलह्रीं

Ka e i la hrim is the first *kuta* and is the face of the Goddess. *Ha sa ka ha la hrim* is the second *kuta* and is the middle portion of the Goddess. *Sa ka la hrim* is the third and last *kuta* and is her feet.

The three *Hrims* crowning the three *kutas* represent the triple knowledge which is explained in subsequent verses.

पञ्चदशाक्षरवपुषं
गात्रविभागेन पङ्क्तिशस्त्रितयीम् ।
वन्दे ललितां विद्यां
मुनिजनसाम्राज्यमौनगुरुदृष्टाम् ॥ २६ ॥

I bow down to Lalita, the Vidya, the body of fifteen letters, threefold on account of the division of the body in a sequence, perceived by the Silent Master of the sovereign realm of sages.

The fifteen letters of Panchadasi form the body of the Goddess. The Mantra is three-fold on account of the three *kutas* identified with the divisions of the Mother's body. The Rishi, seer of the Mantra is Dakshinamurti, the Master of all sages, the Supreme Silent One. The Chandas, metre, is Panktih. The Devata, deity, is Lalita Tripurasundari.

हाद्यां केचन काद्या-
मन्ये प्रणमन्ति मन्त्रवर्णमयीम् ।
पञ्चाक्षर्यामिव सा
सप्ताक्षर्यां च जयति नादकला ॥ २७ ॥

Some bow down to her constituted of the letters of the Mantra by means of Hadi; others by means of Kadi. The vibrant Nada-kala is supreme in the seven letters just in the same way as in the five letters.

Hadi is the Mantra beginning with *ha*, worshipped and promulgated by Agastya. The Mantra is *Ha sa ka la hrim ha sa ka ha la hrim sa ka la hrim.*

हसकलह्रीं हसकहलह्रीं सकलह्रीं

If we do not count the letters that are repeated, *ha sa ka la hrim* are the five letters in the Mantra.

Kadi is the Mantra beginning with *ka*, worshipped by Kama and is the regular Panchadasi Mantra. If we do not count the letters that are repeated, there are in the Mantra seven letters *ka e i la hrim ha sa.*

Hadi and *Kadi* are both in vogue amongst Sri Vidya worshippers. Both are held in high regard as the *Nadakala* reigns supreme in the five letters of the *Hadi* as well as in the seven letters of the *Kadi* Mantra.

वाग्भवमस्तकमाया
    जगदज्ञानान्तसिद्धये गेया ।
मुखपङ्कजाग्रकलया
    वाणीसिद्धिं बुधस्य कलयति या ॥ २८ ॥

The Hrim at the head of the Vagbhava kuta has to be sung for putting an end to the ignorance about the world. It accomplishes for the wise man fulfilment in speech through the first part which is the face-lotus.

The first *kuta* or part of the Mantra is the face-lotus of the Goddess and is known as Vagbhava, born out of the primordial Vak. And so the first *kuta* grants Vak Siddhi, fulfilment in speech.

The knowledge about the world without knowing that it is a formulation of God is a partial knowledge. To mistake this partial knowledge as total knowledge is ignorance. The *Hrim* at the head of the first *kuta* puts an end to this ignorance.

जगदीश्वरविज्ञानो-
ल्लासनचुञ्चुं सदागमप्रणवम् ।
कामेशखण्डचूडा-
लङ्कारं नौति तन्त्रविद् धन्यः ॥ २९ ॥

The fortunate knower of the Tantra bows down to the crest-jewel of Kamaraja khanda, the Tantric Pranava, expert in manifesting the knowledge about world and God.

The second *kuta* of the Mantra is known as *Kamaraja Khanda* as it represents the original desire before creation.

The Tantric Pranava is *Hrim*. It occupies the same place as Aum in the Vedantic lore.

The *Hrim* at the head of the second *kuta* manifests the knowledge about World and God as distinct from the *Hrim* of the first *kuta* which puts an end to the ignorance about the world.

जीवेशसर्गसकल-
ज्ञाननिधानं पराङ्घ्रिजलजातम् ।
सर्वज्ञपदमुपास्ते
कूटत्रयमुकुटमायया मन्त्री ॥ ३० ॥

The possessor of Mantra adores the source of the Total knowledge of Soul World and God, the foot-lotus of the Supreme Sakti, the Omniscient status with the Hrim that crowns the three kutas.

The third *kuta* of the Mantra is the foot-lotus of the Goddess. It is the status of the all-knower as an integral knowledge is obtained by means of the *Hrim* in this *kuta*. This *Hrim*, the crowning letter in the whole Mantra, as distinct from the other two *Hrims*, confers on the sadhaka of the Mantra a total integral knowledge of World, God and Soul, how world-existence and soul-existence are formulations of God-existence.

गुरुजनगुणशतशोधितचित्तं
गुरुवरकरुणावीक्षितसिक्तम् ।
गुरुचरणाम्बुजनित्यभुजिष्यं
गुर्वी सिद्धिर्गच्छति शिष्यम् ॥ ३१ ॥

Accomplishment in a big way comes to the disciple whose mind is purified by the hundreds of qualities of the revered elders, who is drenched in the compassionate gaze of the great Master and who is a constant servitor at the lotus-feet of the Master.

The secret of great achievement is revealed in this verse. The disciple should take lessons from the revered elders, emulate their good qualities and develop his mind accordingly. Nothing is possible without the compassionate gaze of the Guru. The disciple should so conduct himself that he is the recipient of the grace of the Guru. He in turn should be a faithful, loyal and constant servitor at the feet of the Guru.

मन्त्रगुरौ मनुशक्तिर्गुप्ता
रोहति फलति च जप्तर्युप्ता ।
पुस्तकमन्त्रैर्मस्तकभारं
निवहन्नन्धो वेद न सारम् ॥ ३२

The force of the Mantra is hidden in the Guru who is accomplished in Mantra and when sown in the disciple, doing japa, it grows and bears fruit. Carrying a burden in his head with Mantras found in books, the blind does not know the essence.

When the Guru is a Mantra Siddha, accomplished in the Mantra, the force of the seed-sounds lies concealed in him. When these seed-sounds are sown in the disciple he should do the japa. Then they grow and bear fruit.

Mantras found in books have no life, as they do not carry the force of the Mantra and the *tapasya*-force of the Guru, the Mantra siddha. They merely become a burden in the head.

Andha, blind, one who does not perceive the truth of things.

The essence of Mantra Sadhana is that the Mantra should be obtained as a living force communicated from a Guru who is a powerhouse and a dynamo of the Mantra Sakti.